

Sudan connection drives Amarillo church to aid refugees

January 10, 2025

AMARILLO (BP)—South Sudanese attending All Nations Worship Church, a ministry of Paramount Baptist Church in Amarillo, know the pain of those displaced by the war in Sudan, which has created the greatest humanitarian crisis globally.

Paramount Missions Pastor David Preston, who copastors All Nations with Paramount Missionary in Residence Danial Habte, heard the families' stories long before he heard of Empower One, a gospel humanitarian outreach aided by Southern Baptist Send Relief to help those fleeing the war.

"Through my ESL (English as a Second Language outreach) I just remember ... South Sudan becoming a country on its own (in 2011), just the war and the torture, it has really never ceased." Preston said.

"A lot of them have had family in that area that are from South Sudan or just across the border, some in Sudan. They're feeling that weight because of family still in the area, or close relatives that have dealt with it directly."

Preston met Matt Jones, Empower One's director of biblical education and pastoral care, who told him of a connection with Send Relief that would allow him to provide aid directly to the location he had in mind, impacting those at the center of the Sudanese families' concern.

"We sent some money to do some food relief. Went through Send Relief, and yet Matt was able to guide that," Preston said. "I'm so thankful for that connection and I'm thankful for what we're doing."

Grant benefits families in several refugee camps

Empower One secured a \$100,000 grant from Send Relief in December 2024 in support of a proposed \$336,000 project to support households in several South Sudanese refugee camps for six months, said Zach Potts, Empower One's South Sudan liaison.

With the \$100,000 grant, Empower One will support 1,460 households through February, Potts said, providing sorghum, beans and mosquito nets, hopefully helping the families rebuild their lives.

Empower One encourages churches to support outreaches to Sudanese refugees, either through Send Relief or directly through Empower One.

"It's been forgotten," he said of the war in Sudan, "and national and international attention is going to Ukraine and Israel. This is not just another small tribal skirmish in Africa. This has impacted well over 10 million people, predominantly mothers and children."

Send Relief gave \$68,000 to Empower One last year for food distributions, Potts said, citing three church plants, 392 professions of faith and 173 baptisms among the nearly 20,000 people the money supported with food and nonfood items.

Potts will visit Malakal, South Sudan, in February, he said, for the grand opening of an Empower One church multiplication center, where the ministry will work to train 30 church leaders and plant five house churches every year until Jesus returns.

"The fact that it's right there in the middle of this refugee situation seems like a good opportunity," he said.

In the civil war that broke out in April 2023 between the Sudan Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, President Joe Biden accused the RSF and their allied militias of genocide Jan. 7.

The Biden administration cited systematic murders of men, boys and infants based on ethnicity; targeted rapes and brutal sexual violence against women and girls based on ethnicity; and the targeted murders of innocent civilians fleeing for safety.

Estimated death tolls vary widely in the ranges of tens of thousands. Nearly 700,000 face the worst famine in Sudan's recent history, and more than 30 million need humanitarian assistance, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in announcing sanctions against the RSF.

Of the estimated 12 million who are displaced, based on numbers from the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, about 1 million of them have sought refuge in South Sudan. There, the U.N.'s 48 aid partners have received only 24 percent of what is needed to adequately serve those in need, the refugee agency said last month.

Preston is thankful for Empower One's work in South Sudan not only to support refugees, but also train ministers, plant churches and spread the gospel there. He and Habte hope to travel to South Sudan to witness the work, he told Baptist Press.